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SUBJECT: ISRAELI NSA EILAND ON AID TO PALESTINIANS,
LEBANON, AND OLMERT'S PLANS

REF: TEL AVIV 1048

Classified By: Ambassador Richard H. Jones; Reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

11. (C) Summary: Israeli National Security Adviser Giora Eiland and his chief of staff, Roy Dick, told the Ambassador and DCM on March 14 that the GOI has not yet established a clear interagency position on assistance to the Palestinians.

Eiland said that the NSC's plan on possible steps to reduce tension on the Israeli-Lebanese border is essentially on hold until after the March 28 Knesset elections and predicted that Hizballah will launch an attack on Israel's northern border in the near future. Addressing A/PM Ehud Olmert's recent comments on settlements, unilateral moves, and the separation barrier (septel), Eiland predicted that the GOI could launch a big initiative in these areas within six weeks of the election. He also acknowledged that Olmert intends to restructure the Prime Minister's Office into two branches, one led by a national security adviser and one led by an economic and social adviser. Reftel covers Eiland's initial assessment of the impact of the March 14 Jericho raid. End summary.

GOI Still Working on Palestinian Assistance Guidelines

12. (C) The Ambassador reiterated an earlier request for GOI thoughts on assistance to the Palestinians for the period after Hamas forms a government. Eiland admitted that "there is a lot of confusion on our side." The most recent inter-agency meeting a week earlier had resulted, he said, in "more questions than answers." He noted that FM Tzipi Livni has not been entirely successful in her attempts to get the diverse GOI players to agree on a clear and comprehensive position. Note: In a follow-up call on March 15, Eiland's deputy told poloff that PM advisers Dov Weissglas and Shalom Tourgeman intended to discuss the issue further with NEA Assistant Secretary Welch in Brussels. End note).

No Movement on Lebanon Until After Elections

13. (S/NOFORN) Eiland said that IDF Chief of Staff LTG Dan Haloutz and FM Livni support the NSC's plan (which Eiland had described to A/S Welch in a previous meeting) on possible steps to reduce tension on the Israeli-Lebanese border. He described DefMin Shaul Mofaz's reaction as "he had some doubts, but didn't reject it." Eiland said he is now awaiting another appointment with A/PM Olmert, but does not foresee it happening until after the March 28 elections. He noted he had followed US advice not to share details of the plan with UN representative Terje Larsen at this time.

14. (C) Eiland predicted that Hizballah will soon launch another attack along the northern border. In his view, Hizballah must launch operations -- even ones with no real chance of success -- at regular intervals to maintain its political legitimacy in Lebanon as "the resistance." At the same time, he said, Hizballah is cautious not to precipitate a forceful response from Israel that would materially weaken its forces (or create real political problems for it in Lebanon). Eiland expressed concern that Hizballah would use the IDF's March 14 raid on the prison in Jericho as a pretext for launching an attack from Lebanon.

Olmert's Political Plans

15. (C) Eiland said he was surprised about the openness of Olmert's recent comments on settlements, unilateral moves, and the separation barrier (septel). Cautioning that the NSC is not permitted to work on campaign proposals of political parties and has not been directly involved in Olmert's recent proposals, he nevertheless said these topics would "probably be the main story" in Israel after the election. If Olmert is able to form a new government quickly, Eiland predicted, the GOI could issue a proposal "ten times bigger than the Gaza withdrawal" within 30-40 days. When asked by the Ambassador how such considerations would be affected by coalition negotiations, Eiland replied that Labor and other

smaller parties would support the plan. He did not believe, however, that Avigdor Lieberman's "Israel Our Home" party would back unilateral moves.

Move to U.S.-Style NSC?

16. (C) The Ambassador queried Eiland on press reports claiming that Olmert intends to upgrade the NSC into a U.S.-style organization. Eiland admitted that Olmert plans to restructure the Prime Minister's Office into two branches, one led by a national security adviser and one led by an economic and social adviser. The PM would also have a personal chief of staff. Eiland claimed that such a reform is possible, because it would mainly involve reshuffling staff who already report to the PMO. He added that he did not yet know whether he would remain in the role of NSA following the March 28 elections.

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JONES